

## **Bible e-Study** Nehemiah #7

### **After rebuilding the wall, the return to preaching the Word of God.**

*<sup>4</sup> Ezra the scribe stood on a high wooden platform built for the occasion... <sup>5</sup> Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. <sup>6</sup> Ezra praised the LORD, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, "Amen! Amen!" Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD... Neh 8:4-6*

**NUGGET** – Last week we saw the recovery of the wall of Jerusalem. The rebuilding that Nehemiah had come to do was now done. And besides that we saw the exiled Jews who had been taken away return according to the promise of God.

Now this week we see yet another recovery. This is the recovery of the preaching of God's word to His people. This is the caper. This is the pinnacle. God's people returned according to God's promises, who now, hearing His word, return to God the worship, honor and glory due His name. This is the right relationship that God intended for His creation.

- To be free to of oppression
- To be free of bondage
- To freely love the God who created and loved His creation

Today in Nehemiah we see that God has restored His people according His word of promise. This sounds really familiar to the followers of Jesus Christ! Yet we are seeing this particular demonstration of God keeping His promises some 400 hundred years before the coming of that same Jesus Christ!

And the reaction of God's people at that time teaches us something about how we today also react to God's promise keeping; we gather under His promise, we hear His word and we praise Him. This is not just something we do by rote. This is a pouring out of our hearts in gratitude for what God has done and what He has made of us.

Look at what the people did in response to Ezra's leading; they lifted their hands and praised the Lord. They lifted their eyes up to the platform, built so that all could hear and see the word of the Lord brought before them. It reminds me of the Psalms that we read that tell us to lift our eyes to God. [Psalm 121](#); [Psalm 123](#). Or that tell us to lift our hands in praise [Psalm 134](#) or service to God [Psalm 119:46-48](#).

After working with their hands to raise the wall, they now raise those same hands in praise to the God that gave them strength and protection in the face their enemies to accomplish this vision. We see the rhythm of true worship here; God first gives His gifts of life and faith through His word and promises and then we return praise, glory, honor and majesty to Him with the breath of life He has granted to us. We'll see other insights into that worship next week, but for this week raise your eyes and hands in praise to God for His promises!

### **APPLICATION –**

1. When we stand in church to hear the gospel lesson, we are doing what the returning exiles to Jerusalem did, giving honor to God for restoring His people.
2. When you're driving and you go up and down a steep hill, let the high places you look to remind you of where your Help comes from! Remember it was on a hill where Jesus died to redeem us.

**PRAY** – Turn to God in prayer and rejoice for the restoration, the help, that is yours through the blood Jesus Christ.

*Going Deeper together. We meet in the **Fellowship Hall** during the Education Hour for discussion and prayer with all those who're able to come. If you're not able to make it Sunday, please feel free to e-mail me with your comments or questions so that we can have the benefit of sharing them together.*

Peace in Christ, Pastor Tom Rhodes



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### **'HEARING, SHARING AND LIVING THE GOSPEL'**

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### **GOING DEEPER**

In our verses today we see a shift of characters. We see Ezra, the priest is the one who [led the people in worship](#) not Nehemiah the man with the vision. It was up to Nehemiah to fulfill the work that the vision required, along with all the other people including the priests. But it was not Nehemiah's place to lead worship and he knew it and stayed apart from it.

What a temptation – to be the 'man of the hour', how natural it would be to grab the limelight as well. It must have been there, the idea of putting himself up on the high place, the platform for the priests and stand there to lead the people. A great temptation, but he did not. He understood and accepted his part and did not try to usurp another's part.

What can we take from seeing these two men doing what they did?

Christ accomplishes our restoration to God through the work of salvation on the cross. He does the part that God gave Him the vision to accomplish. Christ does the rebuilding of the broken relationship, as Nehemiah rebuilt the wall. It is our part to then respond in trust and faith to what Christ has done. Anything we do in this world is not meant to be an attempt to go back over the work of Christ. That would be foolish, we can't do anything to restore that relationship, He has accomplished that salvation once for all, see [Hebrews 7:23-27](#).

But we do give evidence of our trust in His Work by how we live our lives. We are the [priesthood of all believers](#) and we do the things that have been set aside for us to do. ([Eph 2:10](#)) We are up on that raised platform with the word of God in our hands for all the world to see and hear. We as the priests, along with Ezra, announce the work of Christ done for all who trust in the name of Jesus ([Acts 4:11-12](#)).

Let's return for a moment to the lifting up of heads, eyes and hands, from the 6<sup>th</sup> verse from today. There comes, with the doing of that, a natural attitude adjustment. It's like smiling before you answer the phone. Try it sometime. Just put a smile on your face before you answer the phone and see how it affects your attitude and voice. The same is true with lifting your eyes to the hills from where your help comes from, or lifting your hands in praise to God. Doing those things affects you; it changes and alters your attitude.

If your hands are lifted in praise, they are holding on to nothing of this earth. You cannot shake an angry fist if your hands are praising God. Your eyes can't focus on the filth in your life if you are focused on seeing the Lord. Now, neither of these actions removes you from the earth nor takes away your accountability to live in the here and now. But these actions can change **how** you live. They can affect your attitude of heart mind and spirit.

I know we are Lutheran and as such we are not given to demonstrations of an external nature. But if you are so moved to raise your hands in praise during a hymn a song or prayer, go ahead and do so. Keep your eyes focused on the cross you won't notice others who may take notice of your actions. Besides you are a priest also and as such you stand before the throne of God to give Him thanks praise and glory. You have all the permission you need to do that. You'll notice that sometimes I raise my hands at various parts of the worship service, feel free to follow along. (What other 'triggers' do you use in your life to change your outlook or perspective?)

And finally looking at [verses 10-11](#), I don't want us to miss this. Notice that Nehemiah has stepped in again and along with Ezra calls the people to feast. They are not to live in sorrow over the law that has been read to them ([verses 8-9](#)) but to live in the joy of the Lord. That is where they are to find strength. And this feast is to be one of abundance, notice the admonition that even those who haven't prepared are to be included and the feast shared with them.

The feast the people are called to enjoy is like a picture of the abundance that comes from living in the word of God. That Word is for the joy of the Lord to be made known to His people. There is nothing contradictory between the sacredness of the day and the feasting that the people are to enjoy. It is the joy of the Lord that we are to live in. And while they wept over the reading of the law, now there is a change, now in holiness – there is joy! Now in holiness there is the new thing, the feast!

It's like we spoke of about raising hands and eyes and heads – it adjusts your attitude. So also does this feast. This feast adjusts the attitude of the people to the understanding that joy is now their default position, joy in the Lord.

What could it look like in your own life to adjust your attitude through understanding the joy of the Lord as our strength?

God's peace and joy to you in Christ, Pastor Rhodes.